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## House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BROOKS of Alabama).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 4, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MO BROOKS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

### HOUSTON FIREFIGHTERS KILLED FIGHTING HOTEL FIRE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when there is a blaze, when there is a fire, when there is an explosion, when someone has an emergency medical problem, the firefighter—the EMT rush in. That is what they do. While others flee danger, the firefighter with sirens, red lights, horns, red and white trucks charge into the jaws and midst of danger. Sometimes the danger is overwhelming and firefighters are injured and some are killed.

This has been a tragic year in Texas for firefighters. On April 17 in West, Texas, 10 firefighters were killed while putting out the fire at a fertilizer plant that had exploded.

Last Friday, in the heat of the Texas noonday Sun, a restaurant on the highly traveled Southwest Freeway caught fire. Then with the high winds, the fire spread to a nearby hotel. Houston firefighters arrived at the scene in minutes. They heard screams from citizens, and they rushed into the hotel to find potential trapped guests.

The hotel suddenly became a hellish inferno. First, the two-alarm, then a five-alarm fire. It took over 2 hours to get the fires under control. While the firefighters were in the hotel looking for people who stayed there, the roof of the hotel collapsed, trapping and killing four firefighters. Thirteen others were injured—some critically.

These are photographs of the four firefighters, Mr. Speaker:

Engineer Operator EMT, Robert Bebee, right here. He was 41 years of age. He's a graduate from Dobie High School, and he was a firefighter at Station 51. He started his career at the Houston Fire Department in August of 2001. His cousin, Joshua Gandara, said when he heard his cousin died, he knew why. "I knew he was saving somebody else." "That's him. He always put people first before himself, anybody's needs before his own needs."

Over here on the far left, photograph Mr. Speaker, is Anne Sullivan. She was 24 years of age. She was assigned to Station 58. She grew up in Sugar Land, Texas. She was just 5 feet 2 inches tall. Anne knew she wanted to be a firefighter since the day she graduated from high school. She had just graduated from the Houston Fire Department Academy in April. Anne was an avid soccer player, cross-country runner, and she ran 10 miles a day. Her father, Jack Sullivan, was in his car on the way home from work Friday when

he heard on the radio about the fire. He realized the fire was in the same area where his daughter Anne worked. He wasn't sure whether or not she was involved and hoped with all his might it wouldn't be her. Then came the terrible news that four firefighters had been killed in the blaze. He started to cry. When he pulled up to his home, the emergency vehicle parked in front of his house said it all. Anne, 24, was one of the fallen firefighters.

Firefighter Captain EMT Matthew Renaud, 35 years of age. He graduated from North Shore Senior High School. He was an 11-year veteran of the fire department. Station 51 was where he was assigned. He was close to Bebee. He transferred to Station 51 to work with him because they were like brothers.

And then firefighter EMT Robert Garner, 29 years of age, Station 68. He had previously served in the United States Air Force; and since he finished serving, he wanted to be a firefighter in Houston. He did two tours of duty in Iraq. Garner's dad once told him: "Use your training because God will be with you." He awoke his dad that morning when he walked out of the house to go to work. That was the last time he saw his father.

Mr. Speaker, Houston is the third largest fire department in the United States. It is the busiest. This is the most tragic event in the history of the Houston Fire Department. So tomorrow at Reliant Stadium, an estimated 30,000 citizens, firefighters, police officers, and other people will pay tribute to these amazing firefighters. They were the best we have in Houston, and we are saddened that they are gone; but we thank the good Lord that such people ever lived.

And that's just the way it is.

I insert into the RECORD the 10 firefighters killed in West, Texas, on April 17, 2013.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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**FIREFIGHTERS KILLED IN WEST, TEXAS,  
EXPLOSION—APRIL 17, 2013**

- (1) Morris Bridges, Jr., 41, West, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.
- (2) Perry Calvin, 37, Merkel, Texas Fire Department.
- (3) Firefighter Jerry Chapman, 26, Abbott, Texas Fire Department.
- (4) Cody Dragoo, 50, West, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.
- (5) Captain Kenneth Harris, 52, Dallas, Texas Fire-Rescue.
- (6) Jimmy Matus, 52, West, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.
- (7) Joey Pustejovsky, 29, West, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.
- (8) Firefighter Cyrus Reed, 29, Abbott, Texas Fire Department.
- (9) Kevin Williams Sanders, 33, Bruceville-Eddy, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.
- (10) Douglas Snokhous, 50, West, Texas Fire Department.
- (11) Robert Snokhous, 48, West, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.
- (12) William "Buck" Uptmor, Jr., 45, West, Texas Volunteer Fire Department.

**TAX REFORM**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to come together and improve our broken, misguided, and convoluted tax system. The time is right for tax reform.

We currently spend \$1 trillion through the Tax Code each year, all of which is off budget, meaning it is not scrutinized each year by appropriators. Once a tax break is written into the Tax Code, it usually remains, unlike discretionary programs which are reexamined for their necessity each year. To put this in perspective, \$1 trillion would be the single largest government spending program—larger than the Pentagon's budget, larger than Social Security, and larger than Medicare or Medicaid.

As we desperately search for ways to reduce the deficit, we are making deep and painful cuts to discretionary spending. All the while, we are spending more than \$1 trillion through the Tax Code with little oversight.

I have introduced a bipartisan bill with Congressman RENACCI, which would bring greater transparency and oversight to such expenditures. But in addition to greater oversight, we also need reform. While many of these tax expenditures incentivize worthwhile behavior, such as homeownership and increased savings and investment, there are others, such as the yacht interest deduction, which clearly need to be reconsidered. We are cutting the funding for the National Institutes of Health, Head Start, and Meals on Wheels, while subsidizing yachts.

Let's put this into perspective. If one of my constituents takes out a loan to buy a car to get to work or take the kids to school, the interest on that loan is not tax deductible; but if they were to go out and buy a yacht, the interest on that loan would be tax deductible.

Clearly, it's time to reexamine our Tax Code and get our priorities in order. I have a bill that would end this tax break for yachts. But rather than tackling these tax breaks individually, we need a wholesale rewrite of the Tax Code.

Our Tax Code is the product of years of small tweaks and layers of changes. We need to step back and ask ourselves: If we were to start over and rewrite the Tax Code today, what would it look like? With such limited resources, what do we need? What behavior should we be incentivizing?

Due in part to years of additions and changes, our current Tax Code is deeply recessive. According to a report released last week by the Congressional Budget Office, the richest 20 percent of households in America receive over 50 percent of the tax breaks. The top 1 percent benefited the most, receiving approximately 17 percent of all funds flowing from tax breaks.

It's time for a reexamination of our Tax Code: Who benefits from it? How much do we spend? What are our priorities?

Not only is it time for reform because of our fiscal situation; but at a time of frequent partisan gridlock, tax reform is one area where the two sides seem to agree. Members from both sides of the aisle have said tax reform is essential.

I commend Chairman CAMP and his counterpart in the Senate, Chairman BAUCUS, for their efforts to reform our Tax Code. I hope they will continue their bipartisan work and give the two Houses a package of reforms we can live with.

□ 1010

I have no illusion this will be simple or that everyone will like everything in the package, but that's the beauty of democracy—we don't have to agree on everything, but everyone's voice has to be heard. We have to compromise, and in the end, we vote. I hope we get to vote on a tax reform package that is big, bipartisan and balanced—and soon—because reforming our Tax Code will save us billions, lower tax rates, and help reduce the deficit. As we sit down to address our fiscal woes, everything has to be on the table, including the trillion dollars we spend each year on tax expenditures.

**EGYPT**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. News broke today that an Egyptian court sentenced dozens of NGO workers, including the son of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, our former colleague, to jail, for their involvement with prominent pro-democracy organizations.

Beginning with the December 2011 raids and throughout the course of the so-called "investigation" involving Freedom House, the National Demo-

cratic Institute and the International Republican Institute have been a highly politicized charade. Prior to their closure, these organizations carried out important and legitimate programs to help support citizen participation in the Egyptian transition process—the very essence of democracy and America's greatest export.

I was in Egypt in February and heard firsthand that the Egyptian Government's handling of this case is symptomatic of a broader crackdown on civil society. This was a sham trial from the start. If this decision stands, not a penny more of U.S. taxpayer money should go to the Muslim Brotherhood-led government in Cairo.

I call on President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry to personally raise this travesty of justice with the Egyptian President, Mr. Morsi, and I would urge every Member of the House and Senate to send a letter to the Egyptian Government protesting what took place yesterday in Cairo.

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. BERA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERA of California. Today, I rise to celebrate our core values, American values, of religious freedom and tolerance. These are values that our Founders held sacred, and they are core to our Constitution.

In that light, this year across this country and across the globe, we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda. Born in India, he was known as Hinduism's Ambassador to the West. Many say he was the first Hindu monk to visit the U.S., spreading that same message of religious freedom and tolerance. Today, my friends from the Hindu American Foundation are here in Washington, D.C., for their annual meeting. As they visit Members of this body, they will be carrying that same message of religious freedom and tolerance.

As someone who was raised in a culturally Hindu household, I was taught by my parents to honor and exhibit this same message of respect and tolerance for all religions and faith traditions. That's why, as an adult, I am part of the Unitarian Universalist tradition, a faith tradition that is rooted with our Founding Fathers and includes John Adams as one of its members, and it's this tradition that was embraced by Swami Vivekananda.

So on this 150th anniversary of his birth, let's celebrate his message of religious freedom and tolerance, and let's remember the core values that our Founding Fathers wrote into our Constitution. Let's celebrate our individual freedom of thought and faith, which was captured in this quote by Swami Vivekananda:

Dare to be free; dare to go as far as your thoughts lead; and dare to carry that in your life.